AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following is a complete listing of the pending claims.

1. (Currently amended) A reagent system for substantially lysing red blood cells in a whole blood sample prior to leukocyte analysis, the reagent system comprising:

(a) a first reagent for substantially lysing the red blood cells in the whole blood sample, wherein the first reagent includes ~~an autoclaved~~ a saponin compound, ~~and~~ an acid selected from the group consisting of a halogenated carboxylic acid, a phosphoric acid and a combination thereof, and an additional surfactant that is not a saponin, wherein the first reagent is autoclaved at about 121°C; and

(b) a second reagent for quenching the activity of the first reagent, wherein the second reagent includes a base and has a pH value of about 8 to about 12.

2. (Cancelled)

3. (Currently amended) The reagent system of claim ~~2~~ 1, wherein the additional surfactant is selected from the group consisting of a non-ionic surfactant, a cationic surfactant and a combination thereof.

4. (Previously presented) The reagent system of claim 3, wherein the non-ionic surfactant is selected from the group consisting of an ethoxylated decylalcohol, an ethoxylated and propoxylated linear (C8 – C10) aliphatic alcohol, and a combination thereof.

5-12. (Cancelled)

13. (Currently amended) A method of lysing red blood cells and stabilizing white blood cells present in a whole blood sample, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) combining a predetermined portion of the whole blood sample with a predetermined portion of a first reagent to substantially lyse the red blood cells in the whole blood sample, wherein the first reagent includes ~~an autoclaved~~ a saponin

compound, ~~and~~ an acid and an additional surfactant that is not a saponin, wherein the first reagent is autoclaved at about 121°C; and

(b) quenching the lysing action of said first reagent by the addition of a predetermined portion of a second reagent to result in a solution containing leukocytes and substantially lysed red blood cells and having a pH value of about 3 to about 6, wherein the second reagent includes a base and has a pH value of about 8 to about 12.

14. (Cancelled)

15. (Previously presented) The method of claim 13, wherein the acid is selected from the group consisting of a halogenated carboxylic acid, a phosphoric acid and a combination thereof.

16. (Cancelled)

17. (Currently amended) The method of claim ~~16~~ 13, wherein the additional surfactant is selected from the group consisting of a non-ionic surfactant, a cationic surfactant and a combination thereof.

18. (Previously presented) The method of claim 17, wherein the non-ionic surfactant is selected from the group consisting of an ethoxylated decylalcohol, an ethoxylated and propoxylated linear (C8 – C10) aliphatic alcohol, and a combination thereof.

19. (Cancelled)

20. (Currently amended) A method of preparing a whole blood sample for leukocyte analysis, comprising the steps of:

(a) substantially lysing red blood cells in at least a portion of the whole blood sample by adding ~~an autoclaved~~ a saponin compound, ~~and~~ an acid and an additional surfactant that is not a saponin to the sample to form a mixture, wherein said saponin compound, acid and additional surfactant are autoclaved together at about 121°C; and

(b) substantially quenching the mixture by bringing the pH value of the mixture to about 3 to about 6.

21. (Previously presented) The method of claim 20, wherein the pH value of the mixture is from about 4 to about 5.